



**STATE OF ILLINOIS
BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION**

**Report to the Governor and General Assembly
on Underrepresented Groups in
Illinois Higher Education**

2012 Annual Report

February 2013

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Executive Summary

Students who have been traditionally underrepresented in higher education are progressing through the Illinois educational pipeline at new levels. Summary information from the Illinois public universities and the community college system, along with data from the National Center for Educational Statistics' Integrated Postsecondary Educational Data System (IPEDS) all suggest that enrollment and completion rates for underrepresented students have increased significantly.

Report Highlights:

- Enrollments of underrepresented students in Illinois public colleges and universities increased by 7,575 students (or 3.7 percent) from fall 2010 to 2011 while the total enrollment of all students decreased by 8,472 (or 1.4 percent).
- More students with disabilities are requesting services from Illinois public institutions in order to progress through the education pipeline, an increase of 2.4 percent in academic year 2010-11 over the prior year.
- Financial difficulties continue to plague the overall student population and have not bypassed the groups of underrepresented students. Academic funding appears to be one of the greatest obstacles to retention, persistence, and degree completion for underrepresented students.
- Underrepresented students earned more degrees in the academic year 2010-11 than in 2009-10, an increase of 1,265 degrees (or 7.1 percent) at Illinois public institutions.

The continued progress of underrepresented students in the pipeline of higher educational participation and completion continues to be a statewide concern in Illinois.

Introduction

Higher education is consistently recognized as a critical investment in human capital. The late U.S. Senator Claiborne Pell, for whom Pell grants are named, is often quoted for his belief that the country's people are its greatest asset. "The strength of the United States is not the gold at Fort Knox or the weapons of mass destruction that we have, but the sum total of the education and the character of our people."ⁱ

During the past five years, the *Illinois Public Agenda for Career and College Success* has been used to guide and further develop strategies for continued educational improvement in the state of Illinois. Goal One of the *Public Agenda* is "to increase educational attainment to match best-performing U.S. states and world countries." The *Public Agenda* seeks a high quality education for all of Illinois' populace, with particular emphasis on narrowing the achievement gap by race at all stages of the educational pipeline and on increasing college attainment for persons of color and for those with disabilities.

Pursuant to the Board of Higher Education Act (110 ILCS 205/9.16) the *Underrepresented Groups Report to the Governor and General Assembly* presents data on the academic progress, enrollment, retention, and completion rates of students identified as underrepresented groups in Illinois public postsecondary institutions. This annual report is intended to help develop and guide policy and to measure the academic success of underrepresented student groups.

Illinois statute defines “underrepresented” citizens or resident aliens as persons who are minorities, including African American, Hispanic, Asian American, American Indian or Alaskan Native, women, persons with disabilities, and students identified as first-generation college participants. The group identified as “first-generation” was added to the list of underrepresented groups beginning January 1, 2012 and will be further developed in scope and definition through ongoing discussions with institutions of higher education.

Student Enrollment

When compared to the prior academic year, student enrollments have declined at both public universities and community colleges. The total enrollment has declined by 8,472 students (or - 1.4 percent) from academic years 2009-10 to 2010-11. A decline in enrollment has occurred at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.

Table 1
Enrollment at Public Institutions of Higher Education

	Fall 2010	Fall 2011	Decrease
Undergraduate	533,287	525,815	-7,472 (or -1.4%)
Graduate	52,228	51,228	-1,000 (or -1.9%)
Total	585,515	577,043	-8,472 (or -1.4%)

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, IPEDS.

In contrast, the total enrollment of underrepresented students during the same period has increased by 7,575 students (or 3.7 percent), as shown in Table 2 below. Hispanic numbers show the greatest increase (5,281), followed by African-American (1,121) and Two or More Races (1,581). Numbers for the enrollment of Asian and Native American students have declined.

Table 2
Enrollment of Underrepresented Students at Public Institutions of Higher Education
Graduate and Undergraduate Students

	African-American	Hispanic	Asian	Two or More Races	Native American or Alaska Native	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	Total
Fall 2011	87,291	85,782	29,063	7,467	1,566	1,160	212,329
Fall 2010	86,170	80,501	29,386	5,886	1,661	1,150	204,754
Difference	1,121	5,281	-323	1,581	-95	10	7,575
	1.3%	6.6%	-1.1%	26.9%	-5.7%	.9%	3.7%

Source: National Center for Educational Statistics, IPEDS.

Students with Disabilities

The number of students with disabilities has increased. Public colleges and universities reported an increase in those who self-report and provide medical or other documentation to receive services. The total number of students receiving assistance has gone up by 2.4 percent from academic year 2009-2010 to 2010-2011.

Table 3
Unduplicated Headcount of Students with Disabilities
Self-Reported at Illinois Public Institutions of Higher Education

	2009-2010	2010-2011	Difference
Public Universities	4,737	4,747	10 (or 0.2%)
Community Colleges	13,679	14,102	423 (or 3.1%)
Total	18,416	18,849	433 (or 2.4%)

Source: IBHE and ICCB records.

College Retention

In 2012, the staff of the Diversity and Outreach Division at the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) conducted a survey to examine student persistence in higher education. With the assistance of public universities, the staff identified students who had stopped out. The term “stopped out” means students who were enrolled in one semester and were unable to return in the subsequent semesters, but were still planning to complete the degree or certificate program.

The staff conducted phone interviews with students who had recently stopped out of public universities and who were willing to discuss their situations. The objectives of the interviews were threefold: 1) to determine why the student did not return to college; 2) to identify any issues related to their college experience; and 3) to help the students resolve issues and re-enroll in college. Predominantly, this group of students identified financial difficulties as the greatest factor affecting their continued college participation.

After the interviews were completed, a few of the students contacted the IBHE staff to share their progress. Some found opportunities to re-enroll and continued their education in the next semester. However, many more desired to return to their studies but could not due to lack of sufficient funds.

In addition to the phone surveys, the staff members have been meeting with institutions, community groups, and college students to discuss college retention. Based on the discussions and the research collected, the recurring and notable concerns are the importance of need-based student aid and sustained funding to ensure the student has the resources necessary to complete a degree or certificate program.

Financial Assistance Faltering

The ongoing budget crisis in Illinois stands to threaten the scholastic future of many of its low-income and otherwise disadvantaged citizens.

Illinois' financial aid program for need-based student aid, the Monetary Award Program (MAP), continues to struggle. On December 31, 2012, the MAP Task Force cautioned that increased demand for the successful program coupled with rapidly increasing tuition and fees, and flat program appropriations, have stretched MAP's ability to provide sufficient grant aid to all students who are eligible to receive it. The Task Force Chairman Eric Zarnikow said,

While MAP is one of the state's most successful public policy initiatives and while the state has attempted to prioritize MAP funding in difficult budget times, approximately 50% of eligible students do not receive a grant due to limited resources.ⁱ

This candid declaration regarding the state's foremost financial aid program is very disturbing, and of direct concern for underrepresented students who rely on the MAP grants to complete their college education. As state resources for higher education tighten, students from underrepresented groups are disproportionately affected.

"We can't allow higher education to be a luxury in this country. It's an economic imperative that every family in American has to be able to afford." President Barack Obama (February 27, 2012)ⁱⁱⁱ

Student Completions

Beyond enrollment, students are encouraged to persist and complete educational goals that will allow greater career and employment options. Postsecondary education and training is quickly becoming the only viable path to being part of the middle class.

The day when people left high school to go to work in the local industry and then worked their way up is disappearing. Starting out, straight from high school, on the loading dock or in the mail room and climbing to the CEO's corner office is no longer an option.^{iv}

At the end of the 2010-11 academic year, the total number of degrees awarded to underrepresented students at public postsecondary institutions increased by 1,265 awards (or 7.1 percent) in comparison to the prior academic year. The relatively new category of Two or More Races shows the greatest increase with 661 degrees. This new reporting category was introduced in 2007 as an optional reporting category but the 2010-11 academic year is the first year that the U.S. Department of Education required institutions to provide students with this category. It is anticipated that this category will continue to grow as students become more familiar with the new reporting category.

Increases in the number of degrees awarded were also reported for Hispanics (404), African-Americans (219), and Native American (51). Only one category showed a decline in degree completions, the combined categories of Asian and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander.

Table 4 shows the number of degrees conferred by degree levels and by underrepresented group for academic years 2009-10 and 2010-11.

Table 4
Degree Completion at Public Institutions of Higher Education

	African-American		Hispanic		Asian, Native Hawaiian, Other Pacific Islander		Two or More Races		Native American or Alaska Native		Total	
	2010-11	2009-10	2010-11	2009-10	2010-11	2009-10	2010-11	2009-10	2010-11	2009-10	2010-11	2009-10
Associates	2,911	2,900	2,677	2,506	1,022	1,136	285	1	139	68	7,034	6,611
Bachelor's	3,495	3,245	2,561	2,381	2,536	2,524	367	86	94	108	9,053	8,344
Master's	1,011	1,029	628	578	665	601	98	16	24	29	2,426	2,253
Doctoral	145	169	141	138	303	335	19	5	4	5	612	652
Total	7,562	7,343	6,007	5,603	4,526	4,596	769	108	261	210	19,125	17,860
1 Year Change (# and %)	219		404		(70)		661		51		1,265	
		3.0%		7.2%		-1.5%		612.0%		24.3%		7.1%

Source: National Center for Educational Statistics, IPEDS.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The successful participation of all students in the Illinois pipeline of learning is paramount to the economic prosperity of Illinois. Institutions, organizations, communities, families, and students are encouraged to build on current resources and create practical strategies for a better future and a more prosperous Illinois. Support services for underrepresented student groups must continue to be an integral element in effort to increase educational attainment in Illinois.

All of the public institutions of higher education have defined plans to address student development. These plans include the following:

- Encourage participation in dual-credit classes prior to college enrollment;
- Establish communications with institutional advisement system (meeting at least twice a semester with advisor);
- Provide tutoring and regular contact with instructional staff to effectively complete educational objectives;
- Provide course planning to assist students in the completion of degree program in a timely manner;
- Ensure support services are available to provide assistance at the beginning and throughout the term; and
- Provide financial aid guidance to maximize resources.

The gains seen in the 2010-11 academic year in enrollment and degree completions among students in underrepresented groups are most encouraging. It is hoped that the student support services being provided by public institutions of higher education will result in continued gains in future years.

Endnotes

ⁱ Miller, G. Wayne. *An Uncommon Man: The Life and Times of Senator Claiborne Pell*. Hanover: University Press of New England, 2011.

ⁱⁱ MAP Task Force, *MAP Task Force Submits Report to General Assembly*, Press Release by Illinois Student Assistance Commission, January 2, 2013.

ⁱⁱⁱ Report by U.S. Department of Treasury with U.S. Department of Education, *The Economics of Higher Education*, quoting President Barack Obama, December 2012.

^{iv} Georgetown University Center of Education and the Workforce, *Help Wanted: Projections of Jobs and Education Requirements through 2018*, June 2010.